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AUTHOR Kellner, Robert
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ABSTRACT

As a means of assisting school districts in their appraisal of kindergarten through grade twelve writing programs, a brief list of questions concerning the major areas that form the nucleus of a balanced program is presented in the form of a rating scale. The questions cover the following areas: (1) background for a writing program, (2) overall plan of the program, (3) philosophy and articulation, (4) student and teacher activities associated with the writing process, (5) student and teacher activities associated with usage and revision, (6) evaluation of individual student writing growth, (7) program evaluation, and (8) parent involvement. (FL)

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ANALYSIS OF K-12 WRITING PROGRAMS
Based on NCTE Standards for Basic Skills

by Robert Kellner, Supervisor
English & Communication Arts

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF WRITING--NCTE

Writing is the process of selecting, combining, arranging and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and, often, longer units of discourse. The process requires the writer to cope with a number of variables: method of development (narrating, explaining, describing, reporting, persuading); tone (from very personal to quite formal); form (from a limerick to a formal letter to a long research report); purpose (from discovering and expressing personal feelings and values to conducting the impersonal "business" of everyday life); possible audiences (oneself, classmates, a teacher, "the world"). Learning to write and to write increasingly well involves developing increasing skill and sensitivity in selecting from and combining these variables to shape particular messages. It also involves learning to conform to conventions of the printed language, appropriate to the age of the writer and to the form, purpose and tone of the message.

Beyond the pragmatic purpose of shaping messages to others, writing can be a means of self-discovery, of finding out what we believe, know, and cannot find words or circumstances to say to others. Writing can be a deeply personal act of shaping our perception of the world and our relationships to people and things in that world. Thus, writing serves both public and personal needs of students, and it warrants the full, generous and continuing effort of all teachers.

RATIONALE

As a means of assisting school districts in their appraisal of K-12 writing programs, the particular approach herein focuses on those major areas that form the nucleus of a balanced program.

Guideline questions for describing the types of decisions made about such writing programs are provided. These questions have two aims:

1. To facilitate a schools' self appraisal via a rating scale, and
2. To prompt comments and suggestions along with the rating.

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RATING SCALE

Rate the major areas given on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) where 1 indicates that the item is completely unacceptable and 5 indicates that the item is excellent. Indicate your rating by circling the appropriate number for each question.

- 1 - Little or no evidence
- 2 - Some fulfillment
- 3 - Average
- 4 - Progress toward achieving this component
- 5 - Exemplary statement of this item.

QUESTION

RATING

1. BACKGROUND FOR A K-12 WRITING PROGRAM/PLAN

1 2 3 4 5

Is there evidence that knowledge of current theory and research in writing has been sought and applied in developing the writing program?

Comments/Suggestions:

2. OVERALL PLAN

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Is writing instruction a substantial and clearly identified part of an integrated English language arts curriculum?
- b. Do school and class schedules provide sufficient time to assure that the writing process is thoroughly pursued?
- c. Do teachers with major responsibility for writing instruction receive continuing education reflecting current knowledge about the teaching of writing?

- d. Do teachers and students have access to and make regular use of a wide range of resources (e.g., library services, media, teaching materials, duplicating facilities, supplies) for support of the writing program?

Comments/Suggestions:

3. PHILOSOPHY/ARTICULATION

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Is writing called for in other subject matters across the curriculum?
b. Do teachers of other subjects receive information and training in ways to make use of and respond to writing in their classes?

Comments/Suggestions:

4. STUDENT AND TEACHER ACTIVITIES: THE WRITING PROCESS

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Does the subject matter of the writing program draw upon students' personal, social and academic interests and experiences?
b. Do students write in many forms (e.g., essays, notes, summaries, poems, letters, stories, reports, scripts, journals)?
c. Do students write for a variety of audiences (e.g., self, classmates, the community, the teacher) to learn that approaches vary as audiences vary?
d. Do students write for a wide range of purposes (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to express the self, to explore, to clarify thinking)?
e. Is class time devoted to all aspects of the writing process: generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing?

Comments/Suggestions:

5. STUDENT AND TEACHER ACTIVITIES: USAGE/REVISION

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Do all students receive instruction in both (a) developing and expressing ideas and (b) using the conventions of edited American English?
- b. Is control of the conventions of edited American English (supporting skills such as spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and grammatical usage) developed primarily during the writing process and secondarily through related exercises?
- c. Do students receive constructive responses--from teachers and from others--at various stages in the writing process?

Comments/Suggestions:

6. EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENT WRITING GROWTH

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Is evaluation based on complete pieces of writing?
- b. Does evaluation reflect informed judgments, first, about clarity and content and then about conventions of spelling, mechanics, and usage?
- c. Does evaluation include regular responses to individual pieces of student writing as well as periodic assessment measuring growth over a period of time?

Comments/Suggestions:

7. PROGRAM EVALUATION

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Does evaluation of the writing program focuses on pre- and post-program sampling of complete pieces of writing, utilizing a recognized procedure (e.g., holistic rating, the Diederich scale, primary trait scoring) to arrive at reliable judgments about the quality of the program?
- b. Does evaluation also include assessment of a sample of student attitudes; gathering of pertinent quantitative data (e.g., frequency of student writing, time devoted to writing activities); and observational data (evidence of prewriting activities, class anthologies, writing folders, and student writing displays)?

Comments/Suggestions:

8. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

1 2 3 4 5

- a. Are parent and community groups informed about the writing program?
- b. Are parent and community groups informed about ways in which they can support the writing programs?
- c. Are parents involved in the program--directly?

Comments/Suggestions: